

The High Cost of Tosca

By FLORENCE E. HAVILAND.

WHAT money has been paid out before the curtain parts on the Metropolitan Opera House stage to show "Tosca" to-morrow night?

It is difficult to give exact figures because this is a revival and many of the items of expense included in its preparation are shown in a general bookkeeper's trial balance of former seasons.

But there are what might be termed fixed charges for the production of any opera by this best financed and best managed musical institution in the world and these are open to the investigator curious about exact expenses.

Average Cost From \$9,000 to \$12,000.

And to start with a statement which applies to all the works shown on the Metropolitan stage, it is estimated that the cost of a regular performance ranges from \$9,000 to \$12,000. The former figure, said to be conservative, applies to a benefit

the financial risk gave Mr. Gatti-Casazza a free hand to build up an organization that would produce the best opera possible, artistically, regardless of cost. He need give no thought to the financing, which was taken care of for him. His singers were to remain in New York during the opera season. He and they had opportunity to progress unhurried without the pressure of financial need. Neither interest nor dividends have ever been paid on the original money invested.

The first few years of the new regime saw enormous deficits, but slightly diminishing ones. The men who had assumed the risk bore it, and Mr. Gatti-Casazza's genius for organizing began to make itself felt. It appeared not only in the coordinating of the spider web of departments and activities in the opera house but in the resulting high quality of the opera given. It was also effective in increasing the popularity of operagoing, so that it became a habit and a necessity rather than a luxury to an increasing number of the

finds hats, shoes, garments in careful readiness, and all somewhat with the air of the living character."

"But it is impossible that they are all so compact—the chorus's here, the supers' here, the principals' here! And there is nothing to do to these many costumes?"

"Oh, nothing. And Madame Jeritza has her own costumes for 'Tosca.' They are new. The one for the second act has some stones—diamonds, I think. I have not seen them. But she does not care for very much display."

Madame Jeritza has many rehearsals, but of new operas. She told me her ideal of "Tosca" is for a less conventional and pompous tragic character, and a more natural one.

The cost in preparation and planning for any opera when it is new covers weeks and months.

Those who are at work daily on definite preparations for the gay throng that will view the opening of the season include a quaint carpenter who takes out the seat of an orchestra chair and with some puzzled inquiring glances, repairs and replaces it. An electrician takes lights out and puts them in again, testing them, flashing the familiar rows on and off. A woman polishes the glass panel in a door. Another invades the sanctity of the most recherche boxes, dusting the gilt chairs therein.

In the meanwhile the stage swarms with a busy crew, which will become the shifting crews that fill the successive periods of the twenty-four hour day in the opera season.

A fluttering host of scenes in place like banners above the stage, with strange gaps where unfilled spaces yawn, hint of the enormous elasticity of the equipment. Electrical switchboards from which lights may be played according to minutely accurate schedules can be seen. One is tempted to press the thunder button and be rewarded by the terrifying reverberations of romance.

Galleries and bridges exist where galleries and bridges are incredible, and all contribute to the workable qualities of this mimic world.

A man strolls about with a tiny model scene just studying it thoughtfully.

The outer curtain falls and an orchestra rehearsal takes place. There are interesting themes played over and over again, with discussion and much conversation in four languages at once in the intervals.

Splendid new appointments have been provided in the dressing rooms of the prima donnas and of Mme. Rosina Galli, the premier danseuse.

A hundred more notes could be added to this mere handful, gathered to furnish evidence of what nobody dreams of converting, the immense expense entailed in the production of opera.



Mme. Marie Jeritza as Tosca.

performance when the principals as a rule give their services. So, elaborating upon these figures to include the fees paid to artists and the cost of experts in several special fields, it is safe to assume that a new opera on its opening night has cost in the neighborhood of \$25,000.

Many special expenses intended to freshen the house itself and to restore the opera of "Tosca" to its pristine state are involved in the immediate revival of it and these swell the cost of its production to a sum between \$12,000 and \$15,000.

There is official silence on this subject as a rule of the Metropolitan, but considering the elaborate organization necessary, the personnel of principals, supporting cast, chorus, supers, expert directors in all departments, orchestra, investiture of scenery and properties, the sum stated will be seen to be justified.

The justification will be felt when the curtain rises on the first act of "Tosca" to-morrow night—for an opening of the opera season is of first importance and nothing is spared to make the occasion a blended glory of artistry. Madame Jeritza, who chiefly won popularity in the role last year—her first season here—will again be the Tosca.

Only Self-Supporting Opera House.

To-day the Metropolitan Opera House is said to offer the only opera in the world that pays for itself. A policy of offering productions lavish in real excellence, careful management, the devoted support of a handful of men who have assumed the entire financial risk and the increasing patronage of an interested public have brought this about.

When the present Metropolitan Opera Company was formed the men assuming

people. Mr. Gatti-Casazza had made opera too fine to miss.

Contrary to commonly accepted opinion, the boxes do not pay for the cost of producing an opera. The lower priced seats are most important factors. It is the regular support of the music lovers that tips the balance of cost toward the safety mark. If the production is excellent these seats are full.

It has been found that lavish expenditures are justifiable and that they insure the support of the public. The great need, as some in authority see it, is for more and better accommodations for those who really, systematically support finely presented opera, the music lovers. The form of the opera house is antiquated, so that as every one knows some of the seats are impossible. It has been estimated that if one or two thousand more seats were available they would be used. The directors are not unmindful of the long queues that stand in rain and snow to secure only second rate accommodations for their patience.

Two weeks before the performance it is impossible to discover an individual concerned who has "Tosca" on his mind. Said Mr. Seidel, who invests each opera with its equipment:

"If we were to be told at 5 o'clock that 'Tosca' must be given at 8, any day, even if the scenery were at the warehouse, where it is kept, we could give it."

The costumes? "Mario Caveradossi? This is his painter's tunic; this the coat in which he is shot." The garments swing out, ready to descend upon the shoulders to wear them, mute but already curiously alive. "This is for Scarpia, this is for the Sacristan. One

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